

Message Text

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S E C R E T LONDON 00401

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: UK XF
SUBJECT: US-UK CONSULTATION ON MIDDLE EAST ISSUES

1. MINISTER OF STATE FRANK JUDD, WHO IS SERVING AS ACTING FOREIGN SECRETARY WHILE OWEN IS ON LEAVE, INVITED DCM TO CALL ON JANUARY 9 FOR GENERAL DISCUSSION OF MIDDLE EAST. JUDD SAID HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI NEGOTIATION AND THE POSSIBILITY OF IMPASSE. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT A FAILURE TO REACH A SOLUTION ON THE WEST BANK WOULD LEAD TO SIGNIFICANT INTERNAL SECURITY DISTURBANCES THERE, AS WELL AS POTENTIALLY UNDERMINE THE MODERATE ARAB REGIMES. HE ALSO ASKED FOR ANALYSIS OF US TACTICS IN THE AREA AND SAID THAT IN HIS VIEW THE US AND THE UK HAVE AN OBLIGATION BOTH TO SUPPORT CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL AND TO MAKE CLEAR TO THE ISRAELIS WHEN WE THINK THEY ARE TAKING TOO INTRANSIGENT A POSITION. IN CONCLUSION, JUDD SAID IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO THE FOREIGN OFFICE IF, IN ADDITION TO US-UK DISCUSSIONS IN WASHINGTON, A MORE INTENSIVE EXCHANGE ON THE MIDDLE EAST TOOK PLACE IN LONDON, ESPECIALLY THROUGH VISITS BY SENIOR US OFFICIALS TO LONDON FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH UK OFFICIALS AT POLICY LEVEL.

2. IN GENERAL RESPONSE, DCM DREW ON EXISTING POLICY
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GUIDANCE AND NOTED THAT THE US-UK DIALOGUE ON THE MIDDLE EAST HAD INEVITABLY BEEN CENTERED IN WASHINGTON RATHER THAN HERE SINCE US POLICY MAKERS HAVE BEEN READILY ACCESSIBLE TO THE BRITISH EMBASSY. JUDD EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR STEADY BRIEFINGS GIVEN TO BRITISH EMBASSY, BUT AGAIN STRESSED THAT AS PART OF THE "WHOLE ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP" THE DIALOGUE SHOULD ALSO BE

CARRIED ON IN LONDON WITH FCO PRINCIPALS.

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3. COMMENT: WE RECOGNIZE THE CONSTRAINTS ON THE TIME OF DEPARTMENT OFFICERS HANDLING THE ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEM AND THEIR UNDERSTANDABLE DESIRE TO AVOID DOUBLE BRIEFINGS. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD BE RESPONSIVE TO THIS HIGH-LEVEL REQUEST FROM THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, ESPECIALLY SINCE WITH BEGIN'S LATEST STOP HERE AND CALLAGHAN'S VISIT TO EGYPT, HMG MINISTERS ARE NOW PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS. IN ANY EVENT, WE OWE JUDD AN ANSWER. WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT WASHINGTON PROVIDE US AS SOON AS POSSIBLE WITH A PRESENTATION TO JUDD REFLECTING OUR LATEST READING ON THE CENTRAL ELEMENTS OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND OUR TACTICAL JUDGMENTS ON BEST WAYS TO PROCEED. WE WOULD STRESS THAT IN ORDER TO BE RESPONSIVE TO THE FCO'S FELT NEED HERE, SUCH A POLICY BRIEFING SHOULD BE SENSITIVE IN CHARACTER AND NOT MERELY CONTAIN GENERAL US VIEWS WHICH COULD BE CIRCULATED MORE BROADLY. ALSO, WE RECOMMEND THAT SENIOR US OFFICIALS TRAVELLING TO AND FROM THE AREA SCHEDULE STOP-OVERS IN LONDON WHEN POSSIBLE FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH SENIOR UK OFFICIALS.

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4. PLEASE ADVISE.

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